

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1869.

Subject: The Power of Love.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



NEW-YORK:

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1869

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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# THE POWER OF LOVE.

SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 7, 1869.

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"GRACE be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."—  
EPH. vi. 24.

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THIS is the climax of a most noble epistle; and there is no letter of Paul that came from the very centre of divine love with more richness, power, and brilliancy, and in which he deduces more clearly and more numerously the evidences and fruits of a truly Christian life, than in this one to the Ephesians. The conception of a Christ-like life, its duties, its fruitions, its trials and victories, is not more grandly set forth anywhere. The last note of this symphony is, "Grace be upon all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity"—as if loving the Lord Jesus Christ was at once the consummation which all duties lead toward, and the source or inspiration from which all duties spring, so that it comprehended all the details which he had been passing through; and as if it were a resumption or *résumé* of the whole of what he had said before.

This is the line, then, which describes the bounds of Christendom. Here is the warrant of discipleship. Here is the test of a true fellowship. Here is the answer to the question, Who is right? What is right? Who are the followers of Christ? Who are the descendants of the apostles? Grace be to *all who love*; grace be to all who love *Jesus Christ the Lord*; grace be to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with *undying love*—for this is the meaning of "sincerity," as it is in our version. Who is authorized to pronounce God's benediction, if Paul was not? For this *Grace be upon you* carries with it approbation, applause, gratulation, and promise of blessing. Who is authorized to limit or to restrict the conditions of such a blessing as Paul has here announced?

Among all sects and churches of Christendom, under all doctrinal forms, and amidst various and diverse organizations, they are blessed who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. In our version it is "sincerity." "Incorruptibility," says the margin. The sense doubt-

less is, They that love with a love that does not die, that is immortal, that can not become corrupt, nor change, nor pass away. Not a puff of enthusiasm, not the zeal of sudden excitement, not a poetic sympathy, taking on a religious mood, but a love that holds the soul steadfastly to Christ—that is the incorruptibility which the margin speaks of, and which the original means.

All religion that fails to produce love is imperfect, and so far false. Love to Christ is the one indispensable element. Every thing gained but this, and religion is like the gold setting from which the diamond has dropped out. It is not only important, but precious. It is so vital that if it be present—this true love—it carries with it all privilege, all promise, and all prerogative. If it be absent, it can not be made up. There is no equivalent nor substitute for it. All is void if there be not love. Apostolicity is nothing, reverence is nothing, sincerity is nothing, if this element is lacking. This moral law is as absolute as any natural law. A religion which results in true and abiding love, no matter how it expresses itself, no matter how heretical it is, no matter how it is organized, no matter what ordinances are present and what are absent—such a religion is divine; and all that profess it, and have it—grace be upon them! They love the Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible, undying love. And no matter how pompous, nor how long descended, nor how much defended, nor how far in every respect reverend and catholic, a church is, if it fails in its doctrines, or its ordinances, or its methods, to produce love, it is invalid; it is useless. For that is the bright centre toward which every thing must aim, and which every thing must reach, if it is to be effectual.

1. This love to Christ, as a great soul-force, accomplishes that which is indispensable to the whole ripening of the human soul—namely, whatever unites it in vital sympathy to God. The human soul, without personal union with God, is sunless and summerless, and can never blossom nor ripen.

To bring this lower order in creation up to a divine union, so that it shall make the leap from the animal to the spiritual sphere, from the lower to the higher condition, is the one problem of history. It can not be done by reason, although reason is largely subordinated, and is auxiliary. But the reason, dominant, can never bring the soul into vital union with God. Even if by searching it could find him, it would stop short in the finding. It would make no further acquaintance with him. So that science, which is the child of reason, will never minister directly to this consummation, though indirectly it will, or will prepare the way for it, and will furnish various auxiliaries to its instruments.

Neither can this be done by conscience. Conscience has power;



but not the power to create sympathy. No man will be joined to God by conscience; contrariwise, men will, more likely, by mere conscience, which excites fear, be driven away from God.

It can not, either, be done by awe and reverence, which are adjuncts, but which, while they give toning and shadow to the higher feelings, give them no solar heat. They tend to lower and humble the soul; not to inspire and elevate it. They have their place among other feelings. Neither have they found God, nor have they ever led a soul to find him—still less to join him. Love, as a disposition, as a constant mood, has a welding power which can bring the soul to God, and fix it there. Finding him, it can bring the soul into communion with him, so that there shall be a personal connection between the divine nature and the human nature. It is a power that belongs to every single individual soul in the race. There is no one who may not rise up into union with God by the power of love. That is the wing which will carry the soul safely through the wide distance; and there is no other wing that can beat its way there.

This is the doctrine which blazes throughout Christ's teachings. It is the interpretation that he gave of the whole law, that it meant nothing but love—love to God and love to man. And that sublimest didactic psalm that was ever chanted through the ages—the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians—is to the same purport. Without love every other grace and every other attainment is void. Love, then, is the one interpreter between God and man.

2. Love, also, is the one facile harmonizer of the internal discords of the human soul. It induces an atmosphere in us in which all feelings find their summer, and so their ripeness. Around no other one centre of the human soul will all the faculties gather in submission and in obedience; but they will around love. It has power to control rage and anger, and subdue them. It breaks self-will and obstinacy. It persuades pride. It stimulates imagination, and enriches it. It gives energy to all the moral sentiments; ennobles them; sweetens them; gives them more power. While it fires each individual power with intense fervor, it mingles the different manifestations of power, like flames, in a harmonious fellowship.

Love it is—not conscience—that is God's regent in the human soul, because it can govern the soul as nothing else can.

3. Love is the only experience which keeps the soul always in a relation of sympathy and of harmony with one's fellows; and so it is the truest principle of society. If society ever rises out of its lower passions and entanglements into a pure and joyous condition, it will be by the inspiration of a divine love. This alone will enable it to convert knowledge to benefit.

Art, instructed by science, may give us better light, and

cheaper; it may drain cities of dangerous elements; it may build better tenements; it may find better food; it may give better clothing; it may surround the bodily life with more comforts and material helps: but the soul lies further back than the skin; and society is something more than the aggregate of happy animals. Society is tormented by the dispositions of men more than by its own ignorance. While science will enlighten men; while art will augment their physical comfort; while these will indirectly smooth the way for higher advancement, or prove auxiliaries to it, they are not the prime elements of elevation; and nothing will ever elevate society that does not first change the individual heart, and animate it with the power of true love. But when the individual heart is changed, and communities begin to multiply and touch each other, so that they can create a public sentiment in society, reformations will grow easy. Then we shall have a sociology that will have a science.

4. Love is almost the only *prophetic* power of the soul. It is the chief principle that inspires hope of immortality. This world is good enough for every faculty but love. The purer and stronger love is, the more is every one who experiences it convinced that language and customs were never framed for love; that of all the feelings there is the least provision made for it; that here it has no abiding city. It has not its suitable appliances here. Here it is tangled, and hampered, and imprisoned, and heavily laden, and oppressed. It is laughed at in its inception, and is expected to wear out. Yet there is in every soul that knows how deeply and truly to love the conviction that somewhere there must be a better expression of that which is the very marrow of life itself.

We can imagine without violent shock the decadence and sleep of every faculty but love. If a man does not believe in immortality, let him apply his doctrine to reason, and he says, "Stars go down, and why not the reason? It may go down into darkness, or it may rise somewhere else in another personality." All the faculties of the soul might come up in order, and one after another might be imagined to be consigned to the sleep that all shall find if there be no life hereafter; but no man ever loved his mother, and consigned her with any tolerance to an everlasting sleep. No man ever loved his wife, and buried her, saying, with any composure, "There is no immortality for her." No man ever bore his child to the grave, though it were one that he could carry in the palm of his hand, that every thing in his nature did not rise up, and say, "Let me find it again." No man ever proudly loved a heroic father, and consented that that father should go to extinction. The flame of love, once shining, no one can endure to believe will ever go out. Love, therefore, teaches the soul to long for, and to believe in, a better land.



If you think that in this diverse but brief exposition of the power of love, I have transcended good reason, listen and see whether I have equaled the declarations of Scripture on the same subject. If you think I have been extravagant, is not the apostle more extravagant?

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." "Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." "And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Upon all, then, who have learned this sacred secret; upon all who have been scholars to Christianity and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and have learned to love Christ in perpetuity, permanently—upon all these, "grace," from God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and grace from all Christian men, in godly fellowship.

If these things be so, then the love-producing power is the test and criterion of all theologies, and all churches, and all ordinances. We have been accustomed to search for these things on the side of reason. We have sought by logic, by philosophy, and by processes of ratiocination, to settle the relative merits of different beliefs and different organizations. And we have failed.

The true church is the one which has in it the divine art of producing love, and that continuously. It matters not whether your ordinances were ever thought of by the apostles. An ordinance is a good one if it leads you to love. It makes no difference to me if you pile up symbols, and invent rituals. Pile them up. Invent them. Let there be a new one for every round day of the year. All I ask is, Do they educate to love? They are good if they inspire love, if they continue it, and if they purify it; and they are not a whit worse if you show that they are men's inventions. I impose them upon men, not because they have authenticity in history, but because that is authentic which has the power of creating love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and, through that love, to our fellow-men. On the other hand, bring your hoary ceremonials of eighteen hundred years' pilgrimage, and show that ages and ages have passed over them—they are of no value except for what they can do. And what they can do is of no account if they can not do this highest thing—create love.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!" Grace be upon all theologians that tend to create love; upon all services that tend to inspire love; upon all organizations that tend to promote love. No grace upon any thing else. That which does not touch love does not touch any thing religious which is worth our consideration—certainly not worth our suffering for.

How vast, then, has been the waste of zeal! How vast the waste of the understanding! How has the Christian world taxed itself uselessly!

There stands, on the side of a flowing stream, an old mill, low-jointed, shattered, never very comely. Industrious is the miller; and he gathers wheat far and wide. Night and day, although the stream be slender, economizing its force, he grinds the wheat. And there go forth barrels of flour in continuous streams from that old mill. Men get bread there.

Near this mill a vast structure has gone up, ten stories high. The most approved patterns have been found for the machinery. The best joiners have been brought in to do the interior work. Not much wheat goes in there; but there is an enormous dispute—a great argument going on, as to whether the mill is framed right; and as to whether the machinery is properly made; and as to whether the best stone have been secured; and as to whether the rafters are put on just as they should be. An exciting discussion is kept up in regard to every part of the structure and its appointments. Every man contends that the part with which he had any thing to do is complete; and the claim is well substantiated. There is no doubt that the mill is a superior one. The only trouble is, that but little wheat goes in, and but little flour goes out. It is an admirable orthodox mill, and can be proved to be such. It is good for every thing but grinding wheat—which happens to be the only thing which it was appointed to do.

Yonder, in an old shattered, tumble-down building, is a gathering of poor humble people. They know very little of doctrine, and very little of ordinances, and very little of any thing but their souls' need. They come together, and pray, and rejoice, and love Christ, and learn to love one another.

Not far from them rise the noble proportions of a stately church, where a large and wealthy congregation assemble to worship. They have their altars, and vestments, and ordinances, and observances. They have their ritual, so that there is not one free moment, and not one unharnessed idea, and every thing has its theological comb, or tail-feather, or wing! They are so busy about the machinery of the church that they have not time for much else.

Give me the little mill that grinds out loving men, and you may



have the great mill that turns out ecclesiastics! The grace of God be upon all that love our Lord Jesus Christ preëminently and sincerely, no matter how obscure they are, and no matter how unapostolic they are.

There stands that good old man in Rome, Pope Pius IX. He is not necessarily a bit better for being pope, nor a bit worse. If he loves the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth, he is no whit less a Christian because he is joined to that most elaborate, complex, and needless system of the Roman Catholic Church. If a man is a cardinal, and loves the Lord Jesus Christ, he is just as good as though he were a private Christian. If a man is a bishop, and he only loves Christ, he has a chance to go to heaven. A man may have all the besetments of pride and ambition; a man may be drawn by all the cords that tend to lead him toward the senses; a man's whole economy of religion may tend to sensuousness; a man may so have forgotten the nature of true Christianity that he shall turn it end for end, and take spiritual things, and forever materialize them, and bring down the power of faith to the power of sight; a man's whole genius may be to incarnate and so strengthen in him that which is already too strong; and yet, if he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, it is in the power of that love to make him a Christian, and a lovable Christian. And on him be grace! Let every man say it. Love should stand higher than any other thing.

Though a man be a Calvinist, and though he be hirsute, rugged, cold, bigoted, and a stickler for doctrine, if he only loves, his theology will not hurt him. Though a man be an Arminian—nay, though he be something lower than that—though he be so heretical as not to believe that Christ is divine—yet if he loves him just as much as if he believed him to be divine, grace be on him! For there is in love a logic that is mightier than interpretation. There is a heart-logic that is more than head-logic, and that saves a man in spite of his head. So that a man's salvation does not depend on his creed. Far be it from me to say that a creed is of no consequence. It is of a great deal of consequence; but love is of a great deal more consequence; and if there be but one, it is infinitely better that it should be love. The marrow of a true religion is love. And whether a man be high-church, or low-church, or new-church, or no-church; whether he hold this creed, or that creed, or no creed, if he has this saving power of love in the soul, grace be upon him.

The three great elements on which the church has erred are, organization, administration, and the rational element. Churches are divided, as to their organization, among themselves. Some claim to be apostolic, and regard all others as lawless and self-constituted. Again, churches are divided by their mode of worship, and their ex-

ternal government. Doubtless there are preferences. Some modes of worship are better than others, and some forms of government are better than others. Churches are divided, also, by the rational element, some holding to one form of Christian philosophy and some to another. In this respect they vary almost endlessly, in their open avowals; and you would find that they varied still more, if you could trace the secret thoughts and feelings of individuals, to which no expression is given. The three great powers that are shaping the sects of Christendom, and dividing them, are the spirit of organization, the spirit of administration, and the rational spirit.

On the other hand, the sympathetic, unitizing, harmonizing love-principle has never yet had a very general expression. It has been incidental; it has been largely local and personal; it has never been made the one dominant influence either in any age or in any church.

I admit that there has been in the past more reason than there seems to be now, for the maintenance of these separating elements. For we are to remember that religion has come through a hostile world, and that in its various periods it has been obliged to organize for its own life, to administer for its own safety, and to make of rational doctrines critical tests. There have been periods when these things had an importance which they have now ceased to have. In other words, Christianity has come down to us, in its internal organization, during a time of war. We have come, at last, in the world's history, to a day of peace. And that which was useful in war ought not to be derided, although it may be laid aside, now that peace has come, and it is no longer needed. And there are a great many things in the organization of the church that might be laid aside as no longer useful. There are many points that were once insisted upon, in the doctrines of the church, which might be suffered to go into desuetude. What if, now that the war is passed, and men are devoting themselves to husbandry, they should undertake to keep intact all those means of carrying on war which were necessary before peace was declared? The church was for long periods encamped in battle array, and the world is attempting to keep intact those war-like elements that were useful in the time of struggle, but that have ceased to be useful now that it has come out of the struggle.

Violent attacks are made on men, in order to change them; but that is not the best way to change them, nor to bring them into a redeeming spirit of love. Little will be done in this world to change men by controversy. We must make that chief in us, and in the church, which we believe to be chief in Christianity—namely, the spirit of love. We must intensify this feeling. If we would return toward it, we must reform *by* it. We must produce an atmosphere, we must create a public sentiment, such that churches will



feel the superiority of love over organization, and ordinance, and doctrine.

I am asked often, "Do you believe in ordinances as they are held in the Baptist Church?" No. "Ought they not to be disabused of their error?" I have a better way than by controversy. Let them have the ordinance as they believe in it; and if it leads them to close communion, let it lead them to close communion. Thank God, church life is not Christian life. We are thrown together in various ways. I am not confined in my sympathy with my Christian brethren to that which relates to administration in their churches. I meet them on the street, and in business, and transact public affairs with them. I am with them day and night. And I insist upon the power of true love. Let them hold their ordinances and their doctrines. Do not fight with them nor quarrel with them. Do not controvert them. Simply bring to them the confidence which springs from a true love, and they will recognize the superiority of that element. Nothing in which churches differ will ever be settled so long as we are assaulting them, and contending with them. You never will change Episcopalianism or Romanism by controversy. They will be changed, if at all, because there will steadily rise up that which the Christian world will regard as more important—namely, a true Christian life—a life of love. When the world is full of that element, the work will be accomplished as a natural result of the existing state of things.

In this light, how in a moment the range of fellowship will be extended and exalted! For fellowship is coextensive with love. Grace be upon all that love.

Rise, then, in a moment of contemplation, and look abroad over the Greek Church, and the myriads that are included in it. Do not you believe that there are among its priesthood thousands of holy men; and among its men, women, and children multitudes of truly religious people? Are there not in that church many to whom your heart might well go out, and to whom you might say, "Grace be upon you"? The peculiar form of its organization sinks out of sight in the light of the fact that there are in that church multitudes who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

Take the Roman Church. Are we to look at it simply as inspiring controversy? Is there not a point in which we can stand and say, "How many holy and praying bishops, and how many holy priests, and how many Christian men and women there are in that church"? Whatever their creeds, doctrines, and dogmas may be, if they love the Lord Jesus Christ, and their fellow-men, are they not sons? Am I not in fellowship with them?

Take the Episcopal Church, with all its sects—for it is internally

divided. Do you suppose it is wise for us to be constantly making comparisons, and questioning whether that elaborate organization is better than our simpler one? Look into its membership, and see how many holy men and loving hearts are there. And you are joined to them. You do not need to join a church to be joined to its members.

The Greek Church, the Roman Church, and the Episcopal Church are externally one. Internally they are just as diverse as Protestantism, which is divided up obviously and visibly, just as they are invisibly. But whatever may be their faults and failings, all those, of every church and every faith, who love the Lord Jesus Christ and their fellow-men in sincerity, are of our fellowship—and grace be upon them.

When we come to be released from the narrowness of our own church and our own sect, how joyful is the brotherhood of good men! and how strong are we! We are apt to suppose that Christ's church is identical with our sect. When we are looking abroad and measuring the progress of Christianity, we are perpetually tempted to selfishness and conceit. It is the progress of the Baptist Church, or of the Methodist Church, or of the Presbyterian Church, or of the Congregational churches, that inspires in us the conviction that Christ's kingdom is growing.

But take a larger look. Wherever, under any name, men love Christ and their fellow-men, they are Christ's, and are spreading Christ's kingdom. And how glorious is the church of God now upon the earth! Not that narrow, contending church which the eye can see; not that church upon which you can put the arithmetic, and which you can measure; not that church whose cathedrals and buildings you can behold—not that is the church of God: but that larger church which is invisible. That is the only true church. The outward church, as men look upon it, is split up, and is pursuing a various controversy, with diverse weapons; but there is a church wherein there is harmony; and that is the invisible church, which is made up of good men. It is that church which is made up of the concurring hearts of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth.

More are they than we dream. The world is richer than we think. Take your statistics, not by your selfish side, but by the side of a larger faith, and a more loving faith, and how many are there on the side of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who are near and dear to you, and who, if they are not blood kindred to you, in the ordinary sense of that term, are, by the blood of Christ, made your intimate relations—your brothers and sisters!

The world is full of good men; and to all of them does your heart



say, "Grace be unto you"? Take a man, though he does not believe in the "decrees," if he loves Christ. Take him, though he does not believe in the "perseverance of the saints," if he perseveres, and loves Christ with a persevering love. Take him, though he believes that there is no minister without the imposition of bishops' hands, if he loves Jesus Christ. Where there is love to Christ, do not let these minor faults stand between the great excellence and you. Take him, though all his doctrinal views be seriously seamed and flawed with error, though a false philosophy may under-run the whole, if his heart only loves God.

The question of what they shall do who are to be instructors of men is very different from the question of what men shall do in fellowship one with another. Love every good man. Trust every good man. Draw him to you. And little by little, as this greater power of the greater sympathy of the reigning love comes to have freedom, and we think less of the things in which we disagree, and coöperate more in the things in which we agree, there will rise up a consciousness of a common bond which will make these divisions utterly impossible.

It is the bad conduct of men who are sectarians, and not the fact that they have separate organizations, that makes them malignant and mischievous. And in the summer that is coming, men who love Christ and each other will be united, so that though they stand severally in their own peculiarities of doctrines, and ordinances, and governments, and administrations, they yet will be in harmony one with another. And the world will rejoice in this great one, though invisible, church of Christ Jesus.

On such a day as this,\* when we are to be united one to another, it is a great comfort to my spirit to think that I am in communion with the church general and universal. With all that have finished their contest, and gone home to glory, I am in communion to-day. They long for me, and I long for them. With all good men and true, that love the Lord Jesus Christ, in every church on earth, I am in fellowship to-day. And I say, from the bottom of my heart, *Grace be upon all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!*

If there be, therefore, in this congregation, those that have in them this test and mark—not a mere transient sympathy, not simply an occasional impulse of love, but a deep and abiding sympathy for God in Christ Jesus, and a yearning for him—to you I extend the right hand of fellowship to-day. And when, in a moment, we shall gather around the table which symbolizes the body of Christ broken, and his blood shed, for us, I cordially invite you to partake with us of these emblems. Grace be upon you! If you say, "My feet have

\* Occasion of receiving members into the church.

never stood within the sacred precincts of a church," I reply that though it is wise to be a member of a visible church, you can be a member of Christ's church without that. Grace be upon you! "But I belong to a church far removed in communion from this." Nevertheless, if you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, grace be upon you, my brother, and my sister!

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### PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

OUT of all our doubts, and out from our cares, we come, O thou blessed God of light and of consolation! How much do we need thee! Left to ourselves, how helpless we are! We have proved our own power. We have proved what we can do for joy, and what for purity. We have proved our hours of strength; and we have proved also our hours of weakness. And we know no longer because thou hast said it, but because we have felt it and proved it, that without thee we can do nothing. All that is strong in us which we abhor, and all that is feeble in us which most we admire and desire. It is thy presence, it is the overpowering sympathy of thy nature mingling with ours, that lifts us above ourselves, or into our true nature. When thou art present, then we know that we are sons of God. When thou art absent, we know not what we are. We are servants; we are exiles; we doubt if we live but for the day; we find ourselves going quickly back to the rank of beasts that perish; and we are full of gloom and sadness, both for the world that is and for the flow of events in life and history. All things seem obscure and mixed with confusion and bitterness and disappointments. But when thou dost show thyself to us, not as thou dost to the world; when more than to our reason, when to all that which is within us of God, thou dost show thyself, teaching our hearts to *feel* "Our Father," and making thyself known to us personally, then what clouds can there be? Then storms are like calms, and darkness is full of light, and every weakness is strong. Then in infirmities we find strange joys. Then all the sight of our eyes doth not daunt us. Then the current of events flowing wrong, then monstrous wickedness disfiguring all things, doth not take away our faith. With thy presence we learn to discern a more glorious future, and to become hopeful in all things. Yea, for ourselves, for our own dispositions, we grow hopeful. We believe that yet selfishness shall be taught grace. We believe that pride shall yet lose its power, and shall yet lose offence. We believe that all that is strong in reason shall be strong in grace. Thou, O God! dost temper our souls as the sun tempers the summer; and thou dost create like it, and bring forth all sweet and pleasant things for the sight and the touch.

Our whole hope, then, is in thee. By thy power we are strong. Without that power we are emptiness and nothing.

Accept our thanks for such measures of experience as we have had. Had we but opened the door, thou wouldst have come in. Now thou hast stood speaking peace to us upon the threshold. Grant us that knowledge and that will by which we may persuade thee to come in and abide with us. Come, we beseech of thee, to dwell. Come not to sit at the evening meal, and, as our eyes begin to be enlightened, vanish away from us. Come to break bread and to tarry. Come to



make our morning joy, our noonday strength, and our evening gladness. Come, O thou whom our souls need ; thou whom we have been taught to love ; thou whom, loving, we can not forget to love. Come and chide, rather than severely rebuke. Come and show the mercy of pain, if pain be the medicine. Come and show thy lenient hand in chastisements and disappointments. Only let us know that thou art about us, thinking of us, calling us by name, dealing with us, and let us know that we are sons, and all shall be well. Grant unto us, we beseech of thee, more and more to enter into the fellowship of communion ; to learn thy secret hiding-place ; to find thee out from day to day, in light and in darkness. May we rejoice more and more in lifting up our thoughts to thee. May we see more of thy processes in nature, and more of thy nature in society and life. May we behold thee in all the powers that are exercised upon the earth. We pray that we may rejoice in the Lord, and be strong in the God of our salvation.

Prepare us, we pray thee, for the services of the sanctuary to-day ; prepare us for its offices of instruction ; prepare us for its joys and gladnesses.

Accept the thanksgiving of many hearts that to-day are to be affianced to thee—that are to be united before the altar of their God. Rejoice, we beseech of thee, the hearts of those that look upon them—parents, brothers and sisters, dear friends. Grant, we pray thee, that the coming into our midst of those that are now in the zeal of love avowing the faith of Christ Jesus and his leadership, may be a blessing to them and a blessing to us. May there be many more in whom the new life shall be a beacon. Dawn with sacred morning upon the noon of many who have passed half through life. Yea, look upon those who are far along, and who have misspent many and many a year. Bring them, too, back to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. And we pray that thou wilt grant that there may be from out of this congregation a great ingathering of witnesses to the mercy of God through Jesus Christ. May they who are walking in an evil way think better of themselves than to be sold slaves unto Satan. May those that are turning away from evil fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon victory. Grant, we pray thee, that those who are indifferent, and those who are swallowed up in the pleasures of this world, or in its business, may be aroused before it is too late, and brought to a knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Make thy faith efficacious. Teach thy servant how better to preach it. Grant that thy servants in this church may labor together with us in word and in doctrine. Bless all those that teach in Sabbath-schools and in Bible-classes. Bless those that go forth among the poor and the ignorant to instruct them. Bless those that carry mercies wherever they go ; and may they not fail to follow Christ in the way of love and mercy.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt grant that this church may long stand. May thy name be glorified in it. May the truth here have might, and go on rolling down in power to many generations. We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all churches that worship this day, wherever they are. Strengthen thy servants to preach. Grant that thy people may be alive and full of generous activities. Bless all causes of organized benevolence. Grant that everywhere intelligence may prevail. May justice rule. May purity be more and more infused, both into law and into the executors of law. And may the whole land, regenerated, become a truly Christian land.

Hear us in these petitions, and answer us, for Christ's sake.



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